MARCH 1987

Equity Matters

University of Toronto

Status of Women Office / Office of the President

First Words

I am happy to have the opportunity to introduce this first newsletter from the Status of Women Office. Produced with financial help from the Province's employment equity incentive project funding and student editorial assistance under the Ontario Work-Study Plan, the newsletter deals with issues and events which engage the Office's interest, and is designed to inform and to provoke discussion.

The Status of Women Office was established within the President's Office in 1984. The Officer's role is to advise and recommend action to the President on issues and concerns relating to the status of women at the University. Her tasks include acting as a focal point in questions affecting women on campus, initiating and encouraging research with respect to women at the University, organizing and sponsoring events designed to explore and enhance the experience of women at the University, and providing liaison with the off-campus community on these matters.

Lois Reimer has recently reported to me on her first two years as Status of Women Officer. The report is a thoughtful and vigorous review of recommendations made and initiatives taken in policy and administrative areas. It also clearly identifies problems and needs, and issues a call for the commitment and effort of all members of the University community.

I believe that measures to promote equity for women will strengthen and enrich the University. I also believe that we are moving ahead, and that information and understanding are essential to this process. I therefore welcome this newsletter, and wish it success.

G. E. Connell
President

A Conversation with Mary Lynne McIntosh, Employment Equity Co-ordinator

Mary Lynne McIntosh began as the University of Toronto Employment Equity Co-ordinator in August, 1986. She holds degrees in arts and law and has had experience as a corporate lawyer. While in the legal department of Canadian Pacific, she managed all human rights cases and issues for the company Canada-wide. In her last position in the Human Resources Division of the Toronto Dominion Bank, she led in the development and implementation of the Bank's employment equity program.

■ **How much bearing does your legal background have on your new position?**

Legal knowledge is a great asset since such a large proportion of equity matters are based on and related to legislation. As a member of a corporate legal department, the advice I gave was considered when management made its business decisions. As a member of a human resources department, I am able to combine legal advice with employment issues and then assist in implementation of any new policy or procedure.

■ **Do you see any difference in the implementation of an employment equity program between the Bank and the University?**

In a bank, management decisions are communicated and followed, whereas the structure of a university is not as hierarchical. Add this to the fact that at a university there are many more constituencies with specific and occasionally conflicting interests, and the fact that we have a widely representative Governing Council, and the approvals process becomes much more complex and protracted than in a bank. Also, in a university not only are people more disposed to question and discuss a policy, but the mechanisms exist for them to do so. While this doesn't make my job any easier, I do prefer the more dynamic atmosphere of a university. It's a challenge and I enjoy that. ➤

STATUS OF WOMEN OFFICE REPORT, 1984-1986

- Employment Equity
- Women's Centre
- Women and Science
- Women's Groups on Campus
- Statistics: Students, Faculty, Administrative Staff
- Advisory Committee
- Sexual Harassment
- Child Care

(Copies of the Report may be obtained from the Status of Women Office, 978-2196.)

■ Where do you fit into the University structure?

I have a dual reporting relationship: I report administratively to the Assistant Vice-President, Human Resources and functionally to the Status of Women Officer on women's issues, the initial focus of the Employment Equity Policy. My link to human resources places me on the ground floor of policy development and review, and my relationship with the Status of Women Officer provides me with my link to the Office of the President. It is often the case that the co-ordinator reports to only one of these areas. I think that a link to both is necessary.

■ How does your role differ from that of the Status of Women Officer?

Of course, our functions overlap in terms of women's issues, but employment equity covers more than only gender issues. Our Employment Equity Policy states that the University will not permit employment practices in contravention of the Ontario Human Rights Code, and then enumerates the grounds. They include race, colour, disability and religion. Our constituencies differ in that the Status of Women Office deals with faculty, librarians, administrative staff and students, whereas my mandate extends to students only indirectly. Also, my responsibilities are focussed directly on employment-related issues.

Status Quote

"Few females possess that mental ability and decision of character which are so essential to the successful teacher. The framers of the School Law committed a grave error in authorizing females to teach at all."

(From a report of the Superintendent of Schools, Upper Canada, 1859)

■ The position of the Employment Equity Co-ordinator is funded in part by a grant from provincial Employment Equity Incentive Funding. Would you say that this is a fair indication that the political climate is favourable to employment equity programs?

Yes, I would definitely say so. Not all universities, though, have made the Co-ordinator's position continuing and full-time, as U of T has done. We recently learned, incidentally, that the funding is to be continued for an additional two years, a clear signal from the government that it expects universities to continue with the initiatives started with the first year's funding. Another indication of the favourable political climate is the federal government's Federal Contractors Program by which only organizations that have certified their commitment to employment equity, such as U of T, are entitled to bid on large government contracts. By this, the government seems to be saying that the voluntary method is not working. And finally, provincial pay equity legislation, Bill 154, is currently working its way through the Legislature.

■ What about the social climate?

I think that people are expecting changes. Principles of "fairness" and "equality" are being advanced and promoted in all aspects of peoples' lives, including the work place and the University is no different. The very fact that there are employment equity policies and co-ordinators helps to make people more aware and to change attitudes. Ideally, attitudes and behaviour should change simultaneously but realistically, it is clear that there may have to be a change in behaviour before a change in attitude will take place.

■ What are the differences between employment equity, equal opportunity and affirmative action?

Employment equity is the inclusive term. Equal opportunity says that we won't discriminate and will treat everyone the same, whereas employment equity is more aggressive and pro-active. It seeks equal results and says that we may have to treat different people differently to achieve that equality. Affirmative action is the "special measures" component of employment equity.

■ How do you ensure equal results?

We ensure equal results sometimes through specific affirmative action measures and generally by removing discriminatory or arbitrary barriers that are hidden or inherent in employment systems. Systemic discrimination in compensation is apparent in the classic example of the secretary and the parking lot attendant; it is necessary to review the values of these two jobs relative to one another by looking at the component factors. Employment equity also seeks to ensure equal results by examining any inequalities that may exist prior to the actual job competition.

■ What are you working on right now?

Right now, my main project is to review the recruitment process for administrative staff. In a recent review of the academic appointments process, one of the recommendations we made was that it is critical to increase the number of women in the pool of candidates; advertising positions in non-traditional places and ways should attract qualified women who might not otherwise apply. I am also working on a revised campus day care policy, as the first step in developing a comprehensive approach to child care. The immediate benefit of day care is to allow more women to enter the work place, thereby increasing the number of women in a

candidacy pool. A longer term benefit as it relates to students is to allow women to continue their education which will increase their access to the work force.

■ How do you respond to the inevitable question about "reverse discrimination"?

At the University, as elsewhere, women are concentrated in the lower levels and in certain limited occupations; the faculty is overwhelmingly male dominated. Something has led to this and it is this something that we are trying to get at through employment equity. It is these "past injustices" that employment equity seeks to redress through special measures which are necessary to open the chance to those who may have been denied opportunities based on attributes rather than actual individual characteristics. One of the objectives stated in the Employment Equity Policy is the achievement of a more heterogeneous distribution and balance across job levels and employment categories. As Rosalie Abella says in her Report, "The end of exclusivity is not reverse discrimination, it is the beginning of equality." Editor's note: Royal Commission Report on Equality in Employment, p.10.

G.G./M.L.M.

EXHIBITION - THE HISTORY OF WOMEN ARCHITECTS (The International Union of Women Architects and the Goethe Institute of Toronto) March 24-April 9, Faculty of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, 230 College St.

Commentary

Although it would seem to be among the least emotional and least controversial issues on campus, the idea of a commitment to unbiased language as a matter of University policy encounters difficulties and even resistance. One problem is finding an appropriate policy framework.

The University's Employment Equity Policy contains a clause promoting freedom from "discriminatory language, and sex-role or other stereotyping" in "University documents and other official communications". While this is an important and vital clause, there are many on campus who are concerned that a broader statement is needed to deal with biased or exclusive language in other forms and circumstances.

The proposed University policy and procedures regarding sexual harassment do not encompass the problem of sexist language in general. The definition of sexual harassment has been one of the main bones of contention throughout the development of the policy. As presently drafted, the definition includes cases in which sex is used as the basis or condition of employment or academic progress as well as physical conduct which emphasizes sex or sexual orientation and creates a negative atmosphere. However, in the more elusive area of verbal conduct, the policy does not address sexist language unless it is directed at specific individuals, creating for them an intimidating, hostile or offensive learning or working environment.

Clearly, the use of sexist language can and does create this kind of environment whether or not it is directed at a specific individual. The proposed policy also states, in an introductory section, that the disciplinary procedures set down for sexual harassment as defined do not apply to "sexist behaviour", which needs to be addressed by education or other means. Education will certainly tackle the problem at its roots, but it is essential to address the issue of sexist language in a formal policy at the same time so that education and policy can reinforce each other.

Finally, the University has a policy on freedom of speech which is currently under review. This is perhaps a more appropriate policy under which to address sexist language than the sexual harassment policy. Sexist, like racist, language can be detrimental to its victims but preventive measures must be carefully balanced with the efforts to preserve the freedom of speech.

It is important to distinguish the explicit from the implicit forms of biased language. There are clear parallels between explicitly racist and explicitly sexist language. Today, racist language is rarely tolerated in the University community or elsewhere and, if for no other reason than logical consistency, sexist language must also be rejected. In addition, there is an especially difficult problem in sexist language that has no counterpart in racist language. This is the problem of implicit gender bias in much conventional English usage.➤

CITY OF TORONTO WOMEN'S STUDIES SCHOLARSHIP AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
Applicants must be Canadian citizens or permanent residents who will be entering fourth year in Women's Studies and who are deemed most likely to contribute to studies on the status of women, community studies and public policy. Apply by letter to: City of Toronto Women's Studies Scholarship, Mary Nyquist, Chair, Women's Studies Programme Committee, New College, 40 Willcocks Street. Deadline: June 1, 1987 for the 1987/88 academic year.

The implicit form of biased language can have far-reaching consequences. The observation has been made countless times that language shapes as well as reflects our thinking. With this in mind, the use of male pronouns and masculine terms both to mean men, specifically, and all of humanity, generically, conveys a very muddled perception of the world. In the interest of precision alone, it is important to have separate ways of expressing separate meanings.

There has been some concern expressed that the use of gender-free terms would detract from the beauty of the language. However, there is no reason why more graceful modes of expression could not be devised which are both precise and gender-free.

Perhaps the resistance to a movement towards gender-free language stems from the fact that language is a very fundamental part of everyday life. In fact, everyone who was raised with these conventions of language uses them unconsciously, even those who are aware of the problems this can create. We <u>are</u> deeply rooted in these linguistic conventions, but their effects cannot be ignored simply because the cause is difficult to change.

Implicitly biased language must be rejected on the same grounds as explicitly biased language. It is a simple enough exercise to imagine replacing "woman" with "black" in a sexist comment one hears or reads in order to realize the harmful effects that explicitly biased language can have. But furthermore, imagine that the supposedly generic terms and pronouns in the English language meant "whites" rather than "males" in order to realize that the effects of implicitly biased language are equally harmful.

The necessity to adopt gender-free language was underlined in the proceedings of a symposium which marked the centenary of women's admission to the study of Medicine at U of T. In spite of their growing numbers, women medical students still feel as if they are a negligible minority, and attribute a large part of this to the gender-biased language used by their textbooks, professors and fellow students. "It was clear that the women medical students, who constantly hear 'he' and 'him' in every facet of life in the medical school, know in a fundamental way, that the 'he' referred to cannot be 'me'." The demoralizing effect of gender-biased language is not, of course, confined to one faculty, but is a common problem all over the campus.

Recently, however, there have been a number of encouraging instances of gender-free language being used in the University. For example, Innis College employs gender-free language in its new constitution. Also, the Faculty of Law has since 1982 had a policy of "opposing and avoiding discrimination against women whether by conduct or language". This policy is posted in a prominent position so that everyone is well aware of it.

Last year, the Coalition for Unbiased Language issued a statement expressing a great deal of concern about the negative effects of racist and sexist language in academic reading material and in classrooms, demanding that the exclusionary and demoralizing effects of biased language be recognized and removed. The Advisory Committee to the Status of Women Officer has made the goal of gender-free, unbiased language a priority item, and welcomes suggestions or opinions.

G.G.

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